



Bridger Canyon Property Owners' Association

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2013

The BCPOA Chairman—Tom Fiddaman

Dear Neighbors,

Last year, I wrote that “I look forward to the day when BCPOA can focus more proactively on promoting good development, resource management, and communication, and less on zoning crisis management.”

That day seems to be a bit further down the road, but we’ve taken some steps in the right direction.

After a protracted appeal, the Montana Supreme Court upheld the commission’s denial of a permit for a barn outside a designated building site. In addition to establishing the obvious, that enforceable building sites really exist, decisions in the case debunked the notion that quasi-agricultural structures on residential properties are automatically exempt from zoning.

Yet we continue to be plagued by administrative errors and commission decisions that favor ad hoc preferences over the letter of the law and established procedures. We can’t afford to take every case to court, and it’s small consolation that we would have amassed an impressive record of victories by now.

Our best hope is still to finish the zoning updates, which will revise problematic areas and create objective standards, so that the goals of the General Plan cannot be ignored so easily. Updates are substantially complete for the AE and RF districts, General Provisions, and the Planned Unit Development (but for one key disagreement). Our last major push will be the Bridger Bowl Base Area, followed by a lot of cleanup work on definitions and procedures.

Hopefully we’ll see our new regulations in place soon, as the real estate market begins to pick up. Then we’ll be able to focus on more fun projects, like the upcoming Natural History Evening.

Please join us at the May General Meeting to find out what’s going on in this beautiful canyon that we call home, and consider serving on the BCPOA board.

Tom Fiddaman, Chair

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Zoning Chair
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Mitch Miller
Chuck Broughton*

Jackson Creek

*Open Seat
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Rick Anderson
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BCPOA and Zoning

Zoning Update— Bridger Canyon Zoning Advisory Committee

Updates to the Bridger Canyon zoning regulation are (still) underway. The updates are led by a seven-member advisory board appointed by the commission, with Planning Department support.

The General Plan, which will not be substantially changed, serves as the foundation for the update to the regulations. The goal of the updates is to provide a better implementation of the provisions of the plan, with more objective standards, and eliminating some problematic language that has been added in updates over the years.

The Bridger Canyon zoning district is divided into two major subdistricts, AE (the canyon floor) and RF (current or former Forest Service land in the Bridgers and Bangtails). The AE and RF updates are essentially complete. One major provision is consolidation of the guesthouse and caretaker residence regulations, which provide endless controversy, into a single Accessory Dwelling standard.

Many other common features of the district have been consolidated into a single General Standards section, which defines setbacks from boundaries, roads and streams, limits construction on steep slopes and skylines, provides for Dark Skies lighting, and other features.

The largest changes to date have been in the Planned Unit Development (PUD) section. The old PUD regulation had noble goals, but few objective standards, so proposals were always controversial and often fell short of the aspirations of the General Plan. The new language formalizes what it means to preserve views, open space and resources.

Two major topics remain to be tackled. First, the Bridger Bowl Base Area has not yet been discussed, but if history is any indication, it is likely to be a difficult topic. The Base Area is currently governed by regulations that were repeatedly amended in proceedings that were adverse to the interests of Bridger Canyon residents, as Bob Shields wrote in this newsletter in 1996.

Second, one aspect of PUDs remains undecided by the advisory board. In the original 1971 zoning regulation, the PUD was intended to promote the preservation of agricultural land and open space by creating a density transfer market that moved residential density to more appropriate areas, like the Base Area or well-hidden clusters of homes. But over the years, as a side effect of Base Area amendments, the PUD language became ambiguous, and the commission began to award a two-for-one density bonus with ill-defined criteria, contrary to the original intent and the General Plan. So, the question is now whether to restore the transfer system, make the density bonus criteria explicit and meaningful, or some hybrid of the two.

The outcome of these deliberations will have a huge impact on the next 40 years of Bridger Canyon – it's the difference between development potential that's bigger than Big Sky, or something more consistent with the preservation of agriculture, open space and nature envisioned by the General Plan.

You can track the update process at <http://zoning.posterous.com/>

There's a useful summary of progress in last Fall's update to the commissioners, <http://zoning.posterous.com/staff-memo-to-pz-for-oct-hearing> though we've moved somewhat beyond that.

News and Announcements

Special Event

March 29th 7p.m.
BCRFD Community Room

Bridger Canyon Natural History Presentation

Featured Speakers
Cliff Montagne, Bret Davis, Kathrin Olsen &
Steve Eshbaugh

NEW TECHNOLOGY TO BENEFIT BRIDGER CANYON

Now and then a game changing technology comes along and for Bridger Canyon in 2013 the name of that technology is LIDAR: Light Detection And Ranging. The data gathered by rapidly oscillating (people and animal safe) laser mounted on a small plane will pick out individual geese on a pond and all the vegetation surrounding that pond and produce a three dimensional map that can be "flown" through, much like a video game. But the real breakthrough is that Lidar maps can "slice" through even heavy vegetation and reveal both hyper-accurate topography and also features invisible to aerial photography such as shrubs and saplings. Lidar is a technology where new uses are being "discovered" with regularity. In Bridger Canyon, Lidar has implications for everything from flood plain analysis to climate change effects, to earthquake study to avalanche preparedness.

With the huge help from the Bridger to Bangtails Coalition, Craighead Institute in Bozeman is raising funds to make Lidar mapping of the Bridger Canyon Zoning District a statewide model for introducing this powerful tool. Lidar mapping will inform the County Commissioners, Planning Department, Forest Service, Bridger Bowl, Montana Highway Department, private land owners and many, many others with critical information for sensible and sustainable development in the Canyon and a means of monitoring the health of forests and other ecosystems. In collaboration with various departments at MSU, we expect the data to be the basis of wide ranging studies for advanced degrees.

As a land owner and resident of Bridger Canyon, please consider donating to this project and bestowing on the Canyon this critically important data-driven baseline which will form the basis of the most complete, accurate and accessible GIS database in Montana. Donations will be tax-deductible, and can also be made in the form of stocks, funds, or bonds for additional tax breaks.

Bridger Canyon has led the way in sustainable community development efforts, starting with our grass-roots based zoning in 1971. Lidar mapping will be a legacy for Canyon and County residents for generations to come.

To learn more visit: <http://www.craigheadresearch.org/bridger-canyon-lidar-project.html>

*****BCPOA*****

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, May 21, 7:00 P.M.

BCR Fire Station
Community Room
(Refreshments will be served!)

Agenda items of particular importance...

- * Board elections -
- * District regulations re-write

BCPOA's Bylaws state: "The purpose of this corporation shall be to do everything in its power to preserve the rural character and the natural beauty and resources of Bridger Canyon and the State of Montana; to use its best efforts in guiding and directing orderly growth and development; to maintain, through organization, a definite influence in all matters which may affect residence or property rights and enjoyment thereof by its members; and to hold regular meetings for open discussions of problems of mutual interest and concern to those land owners."

Bridger Canyon Community Organizations'

Bridger Canyon Rural Fire Department, Board of Trustees

To all Bridger Canyon Rural Fire District constituents

2012 was another banner year for your fire department. The number of trained firefighters and EMS personnel was consistent with levels sought, and several firefighters undertook the difficult and time consuming exercise of attaining firefighter one status. We salute all of our volunteers, and acknowledge their very real commitment to our community.

The biggest single action was the purchase of a new Command vehicle, replacing the Suburban donated by the Amendes almost ten years ago. The new vehicle is a four door Dodge, fully equipped with all the state of the art tools necessary to control any emergency situation that can be anticipated. We encourage you to stop by the station during any open house to inspect this great addition.

During the year, the Department did experience more than normal call activity, including a structure fire, and several mutual aid wild lands fire assists. We are pleased to report that all calls were handled with the level of professionalism that has become synonymous with BCRFD.

Discussion has been initiated regarding the need to replace Engine 81 while at the same time effectively managing the Department's debt. Financially, we are strong, but replacement costs for a new engine are huge, and it will take some time before a clear path can be established. In other matters, the alcohol policy for the community room was reviewed, and after canyon wide discussion, The Board resolved that current policy prohibiting alcohol consumption on fire department property would be maintained.

The landscaping for the department was largely completed. The Ladies Auxiliary and Woman's Club deserve our sincere thanks for a job well done and a fire department property that we can all be proud of.

Dennis Guentzel, long time firefighter, and well known to most in the canyon, was confirmed by The County Commissioners to fill the unexpired term of Franklin Coles on the Board of Trustees. We welcome Denny to the Board.

As a reminder, the Board meets the second Monday of each month at 6pm in the Community Room. All are encouraged to attend.

Mike Conn Chairman
Colleen Carnine Vice Chair/Secretary
Peggy Foster Treasurer
Dave McKee
Dennis Guentzel

The Bridger Canyon Women's Club welcomes any woman canyon resident to join. We meet the second Wed. of every month at 1:00. We start with refreshments and neighborly conversation followed by a short meeting where events and news happening in the canyon are discussed. We finish with a guest speaker who always has great information to share. The Bridger Canyon Women's club is a wonderful vehicle to get to meet and know your neighbor and become actively involved in the community. Hope to see you there.

Mary Wolf

News and Announcements

SPECIAL EVENT— BRIDGER CANYON NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION **March 29th 7pm BCRFD Community Room**

To the Residents of Bridger Canyon,

A number of people, in conjunction with the Bridger Canyon Historic Preservation Association and the Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS), have volunteered their time and expertise to enjoy and explore with Bridger Canyon residents an evening of "Bridger Canyon Natural History". They include Cliff Montagne from MSU (Geology, Water and Landscape), Bret Davis (Birds of Prey), Kathrin Olson (Mammals and Habitat), Bridger Canyon Historic Preservation Association (Social/economic history in brief), Steve Eshbaugh (MOSS and natural history information resources), and more! This may lead to a more in-depth set of future presentations on these topics if you have the interest.

PHOTOS in need: We would like to enhance this presentation with a display of photos or photos of artwork (no originals) from YOU, BC residents, which depict unusual/interesting natural history features of Bridger Canyon - geologic or water formations, birds, animals, plants both common and rare, etc. Choose or enlarge images big enough to show well in a display. If you have photos you'd like to contribute, please send them at your very earliest convenience to:

Kathrin Olson-Rutz at : isonrutz@netzero.net.

She will print 8 1/2X 11" copies for the display. (You may also mail or deliver 8 1/2 X 11" photos to MOSS, located at the Fish Hatchery). Please provide a few words that describe your contribution (what, general location, when) along with your name and contact information (email and phone number). This information will be printed out along with your photo to accompany your contribution. Feel free to provide more than one. We will display as many as we reasonably can. (No copyrighted material please.)

Your pictures have a second role. This spring, we will be beginning work on the "Bridger Canyon Natural History Notebooks", into which we would like to put these copies of your photos. These notebooks will be at MOSS and are intended for area students and Bridger Canyon residents as a resource for information about Bridger Canyon plants, animals, water and geology. Residents are welcome to submit additional information specific to Bridger Canyon for inclusion in these inventory notebooks and can do so through MOSS. This will be an evolving project and resident contributions would enrich it greatly.

For those unfamiliar with MOSS, it is dedicated to help children gain meaningful appreciation of the natural world around them through various educational projects (K-12 and also some adult classes). MOSS takes the classroom to the field with trips to National Forest lands in Bridger Canyon, as well as to some private lands onto which they have been specifically invited for learning opportunities.

I hope you find this of interest! Please do send pictures. We are so hoping for a beautiful and engaging display of your pictures. Members of the Bridger Canyon Women's Club have graciously offered to help with refreshments. A huge thank you!

For more information please contact Ellen Trygstad at 582-7624, or eltjupiter@earthlink.net. Thank you!

Bridger Canyon Property Owners' Association

PO Box 10514
Bozeman, Mt 59719-0514

Dates to Remember

- *BCPOA Annual General Meeting May 21st, @ 7:00P.M.; BCRF Community Room.*
- *BCRFD Pancake Breakfast ,Art Show & Silent Auction June 22nd*
- *BC Zoning updates Advisory Committee meets the first Monday and following 2nd Wednesday of each month at the County Court House 5:30—7:30 P.M*

See you there!

Help Control Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds pose one of the greatest threats to the environment in Montana. Most noxious weeds are on private property, and landowners can do a great deal toward helping to curb and control these unwelcome visitors. Six noxious weeds species are common in Bridger Canyon: Canada Thistle, Oxeye Daisy, Hounds tongue, Leafy Spurge, Spotted Knapweed and St. John's Wort.

The Gallatin County Weed District provides assistance identifying and controlling these weeds to property owners, rents spray equipment and offers a cost sharing program (subject to available funds) towards the purchase of herbicides.

For additional information, contact the District at 582-3265 or their website at

www.gallatin.mt.gov

BCPOA Web site

We've just moved the BCPOA web site and [Canyon] email list to a new host and WordPress platform. This will make it a lot easier to maintain, so we'll be able to keep the content fresh and relevant. Be sure to check it out at BCPOA.net. The email list is carefully managed to minimize traffic, with just a few important notices per month, including fire information. If you're not on it, you can sign up through our web site.

SAVE \$\$ - SAVE A TREE

Sign-up to receive your Annual Newsletter by Email

Add a note to your Dues Notice we'll update our records and next year you'll have saved BCPOA some dollars by reducing our operating costs and helped the environment.

Be sure to note your current Email address



THINGS TO REMEMBER

- *Attend the BC Natural History Presentation March 29th, 7pm; BCRFD Community Room*
- *Have a BURN PERMIT before you light the fire*
- *Become a new member of BCPOA or renew your membership—Dues Notice accompanied this issue*
- *Help keep the canyon beautiful —pull noxious weeds*
- *BCPOA Annual General Meeting May 21st, 7PM BCRFD Community Room—Deserts will be served!*
- *Smile, Have an awesome day!*